THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Additional Bench of the Income-tax Settlement Commission, Bombay with whom the settlement application is pending for admission have fixed the hearing in January, 1990 (23|01|1990) The recovery of tax dues will be made after finalisation of proceedings under the Income-tax Act.

Vacancies in Supreme Court and High Courts

406. PROF. C. LAKSHMANNA:
SHRI RAJNI RANJAN SAHU:

Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of vacancies existing in the Supreme Court at present;

(b) by when they are likely to be filled in view of the heavy pressure of work in the Supreme Court; and

(c) what concrete proposals are under way to obviate the delay in future appointments to the Supreme Court and other High Courts?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES WITH ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI): (a) As on 25-12-89, there were 4 vacancies of Judges in the Supreme Court.

(b) Appointments of two Judges in the Supreme Court have been notified on 26-12-89. Appointments of one more Judge has been finalised. Steps to fill the remaining vacancy have been taken.

(c) The process of consultation with the concerned constitutional authorities for appointments to the High Courts and the Supreme Court will be carried out more expeditiously and effectively.

Relief for middle and fixed income groups in tax structure

407. PROF. C. LAKSHMANNA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to give relief to the middle and fixed income groups in tax structure;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(c) what other steps would be taken to relieve these groups from the burden of mounting inflation?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE): (a) to (c): Numerous representations have been received from various quarters, suggesting increase in the income limit for tax purposes to mitigate the hardship caused to the middle and fixed income groups on account of mounting inflation.

The suggestion made in the various representations will be considered during the budgetary exercises for the Budget 1990-91. The decision of the Government will be reflected in the Finance Bill, 1990 which will be introduced in the Parliament during its Budget Session.

Strengthening of agriculture and horticulture processing industries

408. PROF. C. LAKSHMANNA: Will the Minister of FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to strengthen the processing of agricultural and horticultural produce rather than fancy projects like colas and aerated water projects;

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard;

(c) whether Government keep employment potential as an overriding consideration for expanding food processing industries; and

(d) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILE WITH ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) to (d) A number of steps have been taken by Government to ac-